



ROCHDALE FOOD BANK (Affiliated to the Trussell Trust) Newsletter Number 5 October 2019



A brief word from the Editor. Rochdale Foodbank opened its doors on South Parade for the first time in early November 2012. With our seventh “anniversary” approaching, Martin Coupe, Chair of the Board of Trustees, pens a message to everyone involved:

“It is just over 6 months since our founders Iain and Margaret Wight decided to retire from their work here and we are extremely grateful for the strong foundations that they built. Following their departure, we had to build a new structure for the years ahead, meaning that the 10 Trustees now have more on their shoulders than they did before. The 6 working Trustees have taken on a number of specific responsibilities such as premises, finance etc, and work an on-call rota so that team leaders can refer to them with specific and urgent issues and questions. So far this arrangement seems to be working well.”

“The demands on our foodbank continue unabated; we serve on average nearly 100 clients each week and food donations from the generous people of Rochdale continue to arrive. Over the summer we had to buy in considerable amounts of food to top up our supplies, no easy task requiring money, manpower and transport to get purchases to South Parade. Now of course we welcome the many generous Harvest donations from schools and churches.”

“Our income from cash donations continues to support our considerable overheads plus the food purchases we have to make. We are reliant on regular donations, gift aid reclaim and one-off donations, the latter of course being hard to predict when setting budgets. Over the past 6 months we have been engaged in bringing our rented accommodation up to required health and safety standards. Volunteers will have seen improvements in lighting upstairs at South Parade, the installation of new emergency lighting, smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, and the introduction of a regular cleaning service. I hope you will agree that these improvements have led to a safer, better working environment for all our volunteers.”

“Our focus remains to provide emergency food and a welcoming ear to those in need. Clearly we could not do this without the invaluable support of our volunteers, and also the huge assistance of all our agencies and our partner churches and schools. I pay tribute and give thanks to everyone who contributes to helping our clients in times of distress. The team leaders and all the staff do a wonderful job in pulling everything together to maintain this unique voluntary service. The Trustees never fail to recognise all the hard work and energy of our volunteers to whom we say a big thank you.”



Martin Coupe: Chair of The Board of Trustees at Rochdale Foodbank

SOME OTHER “BIRTHDAY” TRIBUTES

Emma Revie (National Chief Executive of the Trussell Trust) - “Rochdale Foodbank turns seven very soon. While birthdays are usually a celebration, it’s not right that anyone in the UK should need to use a foodbank. But what we do need to celebrate is the passion and dedication of the volunteers and local community in Rochdale coming together and working tirelessly to ensure that people can access emergency food and compassionate, practical support. I want to thank everyone involved in the Rochdale Foodbank, past and present, for responding to their local community need in such a dignified manner and thank them for standing with us and everyone affected by poverty in our communities, in our fight to end the need for foodbanks.”

Iain Wight (Founder of Rochdale Foodbank) - “Margaret and I consider it a great honour to have been influential in the formation of the Rochdale Foodbank, but we were just catalysts to unleash the energy of a genuinely caring community. The thousands of people in crisis fed as a result over the past 7 years shows the depth of that care, and from the legions of anonymous donors of food to the indefatigable volunteers we salute you all!”

Tony Lloyd (MP for Rochdale) - “I frequently talk with clients of the foodbank who tell me how grateful they are for the vital help they have received.”

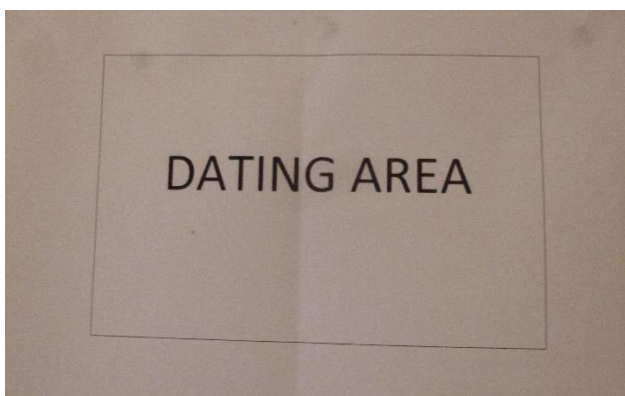
Billy Sheerin (Mayor of Rochdale) - “I and all members of the Council are extremely appreciative of the way that the hundred unpaid volunteers provide a lifeline for people in Rochdale who are finding it extremely difficult to feed themselves and their families.”

Nicola Mulkeen (Pastoral Manager at Lowerplace) - “What a lovely read your Newsletter is. You have a wonderful service and I have always been grateful to it and to those who kindly give their time and efforts to continue providing it.”



Mayor Billy Sheerin with Foodbank Trustees Wendy Fell and Steve Field

PICTURE OF THE MONTH



Is this Rochdale Foodbank’s answer to Love Island???

If so, is this one of Martin Coupe’s “Improvements” for the volunteers”???

We await the first engagement...

IN FOCUS – OUR VOLUNTEERS



Dave Hill relaxing in our meeting area

Dave Hill will be well known to most volunteers at our foodbank. He is a regular member of the Monday team as well as co-ordinating pick-ups of donations, organising drivers to undertake these, and liaising with RRG Toyota of Rochdale whose kindly donated van he regularly drives when large amounts of food need to be moved.

Dave joined the Foodbank right at the beginning seven years ago after hearing about the new venture at St Andrew's Church in Dearnley. His wife Sylvia also had a key role here for a number of years, overseeing relationships with our many Agencies. Dave said "I really look forward to coming into the foodbank where I enjoy the banter and the pleasant atmosphere, and I've made many friendships, some of which now extend beyond the foodbank." He says he also has a good rapport with the very helpful staff at RRG Toyota and as he loves driving, his coordinating role suits him perfectly. Above all Dave says

"Since my retirement I feel I'm putting something back into the local community". We'd all agree with that – thanks Dave!

IN FOCUS – OUR FRIDAY TEAM

Last but certainly not least in our featured teams, the Friday team of volunteers is led by one of our Working Trustees, Wendy Fell, ably assisted by Barbara Stott and Kath Halstead. Wendy, being the epitome of "If you want a job doing, ask a busy person", joined the foodbank at its inception. She says her team, which currently numbers around 15, thoroughly enjoy their work, with gusts of laughter frequently coming from the back section, adding "At the front, the volunteers deal with clients in a warm, empathic manner, and always do their best to signpost them to relevant further help which is available. The office staff and "the boys at the back" of course also give invaluable support."

Though the majority of Wendy's team have been involved since the very start they have been glad to welcome a number of asylum seekers into their ranks at different times. Currently, Jonny and Maria from El Salvador are helping out and, having just spent a couple of hours working upstairs with them, I can personally vouch for what



Members of the Friday Team enjoy their Coffee and Cake Charity Morning

hard-working and lovely people they are. The Friday team are a very sociable group: on the morning I visited them they were all in very early holding a "coffee and cake morning" in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support, and after each weekly session they go over to the Regal Moon for lunch together, where the solid friendships Wendy says have developed among the team can be extended and any issues from the morning discussed. This is clearly a real team!!

NEWS FROM THE STORES

As Martin Coupe has said on the front page our Foodbank has seen a continuing increase in numbers of clients needing help. In the four months from June to September inclusive 1421 vouchers were presented at South Parade, an increase of 14.6% over the same months in 2018. In these most recent months over 19,000 kilos of food were received (mainly from direct donations but also including food bought with financial donations), while over 18,500 thousand kilos were provided to clients. We helped feed a total of 1,743 adults and 786 children during that time.

By early September the level of demand had resulted in our stocks running lower than ever before. While our supplies of tinned vegetables, soup, baked beans, tea and dried pasta have remained high, we have at different times run short of virtually everything else. We expected something like this to happen over the summer months but the extent of it has presented a real challenge.



Alan Newton begins weighing an enormous donation from St Mary's RC Primary School Littleborough

In the short term we've coped by making some large-scale purchases from wholesalers and supermarkets but this obviously eats into our finances and makes us all the more grateful for the significant donations of money that we receive, such as the very generous recent donation of £2,000 by Hanson Springs, the £300 we received from the outgoing Mayor's Charity Fund, and £500 obtained as Seed Funding from Action Together, an umbrella organisation for local charities (our grateful thanks to one of our Trustees, Wendy Fell, for organising and submitting this bid). We were also grateful to Tesco's for allowing us to undertake an additional collection at their store and for giving us £1,200 top-up money.

Thankfully Harvest collections are now coming in from local schools and churches and, together with a further Tesco collection in the winter and the annual Rotary Club pre-Christmas collection, these should see us through what may be a tough winter. We wait to see what the impact of

any kind of exit from the European Union may have on both the levels of demand from our clients and the number of donations we receive.

We remain fortunate in having a large room under the Wheatsheaf Centre where we store long-dated supplies of beans, vegetables, soup and pasta, and in the first full week of November and again in December we will be holding some additional dating and sorting days should the amount of food we are receiving demand it – if that happens, we'll be very grateful for any additional help volunteers feel able to give.

AND FINALLY,

So, after seven years we are still here, the need apparently greater than ever! As I write, the country is entering a perilous and unpredictable time, so we'll see what's happened by the time of our next Newsletter in January. Till then, thanks as always to David Drake for sorting out the IT presentation of this Newsletter and a personal thank you to Patrick Jack at the Rochdale Observer for his considerable support in highlighting our work.

Best wishes from the Editor, John Rowe